



STRATEGIC
PLAY

STRATEGIC PLAY

THE CREATIVE FACILITATOR'S GUIDE
VOLUME#1 ACTIVITIES THAT ENGAGE

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DEDICATION

Jacqueline Lloyd Smith

This book is dedicated to my parents, Royston and Rita Lloyd, who since 1964 dedicated their lives to developing nursery school programs in the UK and Canada. Many thanks go to my sister who carried on their tradition and has taught over a thousand early childhood educators on how play shapes young minds, my two sons who are uncompromising in their quest for a work/play balance, and to my husband whose naturally playful spirit reminds me of the thin line between work and play!

Dr. Denise Myerson

This book is dedicated to the memory of my late father, Charles Frederick Simmons, who believed in the high value of lifelong learning. My thanks also go to my mother, children, and partner for all their remarkable support over my many years in business.

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STRATEGICPLAY: A FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

VOLUME #1 ACTIVITIES THAT STICK

Jacqueline Lloyd Smith and Denise Meyerson collectively have over 50 years' global experience in the design and delivery of incredible learning experiences for clients in the private and public sectors. They have partnered with top tier, medium size, and small corporate clients to produce events that rock. They are now opening their files to other facilitators and trainers—of all levels—to share tools and techniques they have personally tested and used.

They are generously allowing you to benefit from their years of experience in the training, facilitation, and design space so you too are able to prepare, structure, and implement workshops, events, training days, learning experiences, offsites, and seminars that have a strong impact—and are memorable.

Dip into this essential guide after you have been briefed by the executive team, managers, or human resource professionals and you are required to deliver a face-to-face session for anything between 1 and 100 hours. Play with these practical, user-friendly techniques to help your participants feel engaged and energized, so they will remember the key messages long after the event. Redesign

and restructure the tools to suit your audience and the topic so the session remains vibrant and focused. Create experiences for any topic, whether for technical, personal, or professional development purposes.

Not only do you have access to great openers and closers, we also provide you with a roadmap and overall layout so you have examples of how to structure your sessions.

WHAT'S IN THE BOOK?

Chapter 1	Strategically Add Play and Watch the Lights Go One
Chapter 2	Setting the Stage for Engagement
Chapter 3	Add Movement—Sitting is the New Smoking
Chapter 4	Add Movement—Sitting is the New Smoking
Chapter 5	Good Things to Know

STRATEGICALLY ADD PLAY AND WATCH THE LIGHTS GO ON

WHY ADD STRATEGIC PLAY?

Let's face it, people love to play and have fun. And everyone wants to be happy. We will often ask a room full of people, "Who here has ever gone to a meeting, workshop, training, or offsite and left thinking 'That was a total waste of my time?'" You can imagine how many hands go up—almost all of them. When we ask, "Who here woke up today and said, 'Yay! I get to go to that event,'" people usually laugh and it is rare to get a hand raise. If someone does raise their hand, it is usually the new guy in the back because this is his first one. And yet no one questions that we continue to afford wasting time, energy, or resources like this.

Our lives seem to follow this linear track:

1. Play when you are a baby and as a small child.

2. Learn when you are a youth in school.
3. Work when you are an adult.
4. Reflect and play again when you retire.

We want to help break this pattern as people begin to recognize we should all be lifelong learners and that we learn best when we play. We want to make this a circle, not a line. We can play to learn, apply the lessons to our work, and reflect at any iterative stage in the process. We can play and reflect, we can learn and reflect, and we can work and learn.

Play is directly linked to decreasing stress levels. And when people play they allow themselves to take more risks. People need a break from taking themselves too seriously. They need to have fun and be happy. When we are happy we are closest to changing our minds and we are less likely to hang on to things.

Research now indicates that designing playful activities into work can have far-reaching benefits. Employers will see an increase in retention and satisfaction, and communication will improve. Everyone's minds will open to change, they will be more open to taking risks, and they will be more creative in solving problems. There are many areas and ways you can incorporate more play into your workplace.

This book primarily addresses using play activities during working meetings, training programs, events, and offsites. but you can use these ideas almost anywhere you imagine they will fit. And the more you use these types of activities the more your participants and clients will ask for them and expect them; they will become part of your culture. When you begin to add play in applied and strategic ways, people begin to remember how much they love it and they long for more. If you, as a consultant, want your sessions to be in demand and to be invited back time and time again, start adding some fun to the work.

To change the culture of your organization, strategically add some play. People are waiting for it!



Five Step Essential Process:

In all our applications where we are using purposeful play we make sure to follow five essential steps: It does not matter if you are building something out of LEGO® bricks or if you are making something with craft supplies. It is important that as a facilitator you follow these simple steps.

These steps are the essential process used in art and play therapy, design thinking, and agile applications. If we ask someone to build, make, or create, we also need to hear their story. The storymaking and telling are needed for the debrief and the retrospective process. These are invaluable for innovation:

1. The directive is given (by the facilitator, verbally, with visual clues)
2. Building, making, creating (by the participant, a kinesthetic process)
3. Giving and adding meaning (by the participants, internal/introverted process)
4. Making and telling the story (by the participant, auditory, kinesthetic, and visual process)
5. Reflecting on and incubating ideas and insights, answering questions from facilitators and others (both introverted and extroverted processes at conscious and subconscious levels)

WHY IS THIS BOOK AN ESSENTIAL PART OF YOUR TOOLKIT?

These activities are modern, refreshing, and easy to apply. They each have valuable applications for use within a program that aims to help people process

information faster and transfer learning from working memory into long-term memory. They work well in a wide range of workshops, seminars, conferences, training programs, off-site events, and meetings. Always consider the context and use the essential openers and closers all the way through your session.

Let us be clear. The session is CHUNKED into segments, and each segment opens and closes. The segment could link to a theme or topic area, or even to a key learning outcome. The *opener* sets the tone and the *closer* reviews and sums up that segment. You then move on to another opener, followed by some type of content you provide, and then you add a closer that summarizes or links to the next topic you are covering. In its simplest format, think of it as an opener at the start of the day and a closer before the morning break. Follow this with an opener as the participants reenter the room after break. Before lunch, introduce another closer before breaking or ending the day.

Participants expect experiences that will engage and motivate them. They demand interaction and movement. After all, research strongly points to the advantages of embedding learning into long-term memory through learner-centered approaches. This book will help you design workshops that deliver.

This book provides you with a repertoire you can adapt, recreate, and use in all

sessions, regardless of the group's size or requirements. We have used these openers and closers in sessions to address a variety of concerns:

- Induction or on-boarding programs had become tired and needed reinvention.
- Participants needed to ideate to discover new and better ways of doing things.
- Newly-formed teams were commencing a project or needed to be reinvigorated to improve performance levels.
- Implementation of formal learning programs for organizations.
- Improvement of programs delivered by universities and technical colleges.

We have also used these in major conferences for large and small organizations and professional associations, as well as in offsite workshops for management teams or senior executives to plan strategy.

This book is an essential part of the toolkit for:

- Facilitators, trainers, and Human Resource professionals who want to enhance their sessions and extend their range and engage participants.
- University and technical college lecturers, along with in-house learning and development professionals.

- Program designers who are briefed on creating sessions for internal and external clients.
- Conference speakers or organizers who want their events to be memorable.
- Organizational development professionals, managers, team leaders, and supervisors who want to align teams and departments.

Great tips to follow for successful implementation:

1. If an activity does not work out precisely as planned, continue with the session and confess this fact to the participants. You can still ask everyone about the experience and how they will relate the learnings to their work. Every group is different and sometimes the execution will not meet your expectations. Keep a sense of humor about it and the group will joke along with you.



2. Activities are based on the context, including:
 - Group size—The client will usually tell you how many people you can expect to attend. But it is always a good idea to have extra handouts and materials for last-minute additions to the headcount.
 - The venue—Ideally you get to select the room size, although sometimes budget constraints and other factors may prevent this.
 - The participants' level of seniority—Is this a senior executive team

that has never experienced an activity-based program previously or an enthusiastic group of team leaders who are keen to try out new and different ways of doing things?

- The participant mix—Does everyone know each other and have they worked together or previously met? Mixed groups usually work well because people learn more from each other's experiences and knowledge.
- The event's purpose—Do the participants want to attend or do you anticipate some resistance? Is the event something that has a tough message to convey or will the learnings be challenging for participants?

Based on these considerations, select the openers and closers you believe will fit best. For example, if the message is a tough one to deliver do not risk an opener that will stretch the participants too far out of their comfort zones. This would not be the time to try a new activity. Use one you have previously tested on a smaller and more receptive group.

If you have a group that is very staid and accustomed to traditional lecture-based training delivery, use gentle activities that do not stretch the group too far. Intersperse the activities with theory and lecture style

learning to keep the comfort level high and the fear factor low. Do not create resistance at the outset. Most groups will start to become engaged in spite of themselves. As the spirit in the room improves, you can consider adding more stretch activities.

3. Mix it up!

Great sessions that resonate well with participants have a broad range of openers and closers. Avoid following a movement opener with a movement closer. With the number of possible variations there is no need to repeat any one particular mode immediately. Time permitting, you will be able to integrate so many openers and closers the room will buzz with energy.

4. Timing

It can be difficult to judge exactly how long an opener or a closer will actually take. Keep a tight watch on the session timing and also have a sense of what is happening in the room. When you do this right you should not see people chatting amongst themselves, looking at their phones or simply disengaging. This can happen even if an activity runs out of steam in less time than you planned. Change plans and adapt to the conditions in the room.

Conversely, the opener or closer could be taking longer than you

imagined because the group is really engaged. Allow the activity to continue as long as you feel necessary. You may need to adjust other timings in the session to compensate.

Groups will not always finish an activity at the same time and you may have to make a judgment call if some groups are taking longer. Remember it is not always essential that every group finish an activity in totality. People can still learn a lot even if the process is interrupted.

5. If it is the first time you are using activities in your meetings, set yourself up for success by acknowledging to the group that you will be trying out a few new things they might not have experienced previously. Ask them to give it a try and see how they do:

We have been holding these meetings in the same format for the past several months. I would really like to shake things up and mix it up a bit— let's see where it takes us. I am open to feedback on how you think it is working for us and where we can make changes or improvements.

GREAT DEBRIEFING QUESTIONS

Remember we do not engage in activities for the sake of doing an activity. All activities have a purpose and, in some way, they relate to the overall key messages of your session. There are some activities that require no debriefing at all. They are sufficiently basic so all participants can go with the flow of things—the activities do not require any further delving or interpretation.

Other activities, as we have described, are more involved and you do want to create teachable moments to tease out learnings, new ideas, and links to what is happening on a personal or professional level. Some participants are able to extrapolate what they learn from the activities and use it in their working and social lives. Others will need some guidance to connect the dots. Your debrief questions will help participants make the necessary links to have those aha moments that embed learning. You do not want participants to leave the room wondering, “What was all that about?”

The questions always start in a basic way as you simply encourage an understanding of what happened during the activity. They then progress to a deeper level and promote more intense conversations in the room. How far you go depends on your skill as a facilitator and the extent to which those in the room want to delve into their emotions, understandings, and interpretations. Time may also be a factor in determining how far to take the discussion. This discussion could,

in fact, become the most important part of the session as the activity triggers the conversation.

Examples of questions:

- How did that activity go?
- What were your immediate reactions or impressions?
- How well do you think the team performed during the activity?
- What worked well and what could have gone better?
- Why do you think we included this activity today?
- How did you feel during the activity?
- What are your feelings as you reflect on the activity?
- What is a key thing you learned about yourself while this was happening?
- What is a learning you could see in the activity that relates to your work or personal development?
- Now that you have experienced this, what would you do differently next time?
- How could the results have been different if some part of it had changed or if the instructions were different?
- What excuses would you have for not implementing these lessons in your environment?

- How would you sum up the ideas you have arrived at through our discussions?
- What actions will you commit to as a result of this activity and debrief?

TRAINING AND MEETING SPACE

He emerged into the strangest-looking classroom he had ever seen. In fact, it didn't look like a classroom at all, more like a cross between someone's attic and an old-fashioned tea shop. At least twenty small, circular tables were crammed inside it, all surrounded by chintz armchairs and fat little poufs. Everything was lit with a dim, crimson light; the curtains at the windows were all closed, and the many lamps were draped with red scarves. It was stiflingly warm, and the fire that was burning under the crowded mantelpiece was giving off a heavy, sickly sort of perfume as it heated a large copper kettle. The shelves running around the circular walls were crammed with dusty-looking feathers, stubs of candles, many packs of tattered playing cards, countless silvery crystal balls, and a huge array of teacups.

From *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, J. K. Rowling

The quote above illustrates a learning/meeting space that immediately engages. Clearly an exaggeration, but it is a great description of a space that draws you in, captivates your imagination, and opens the mind to consider that anything is possible.

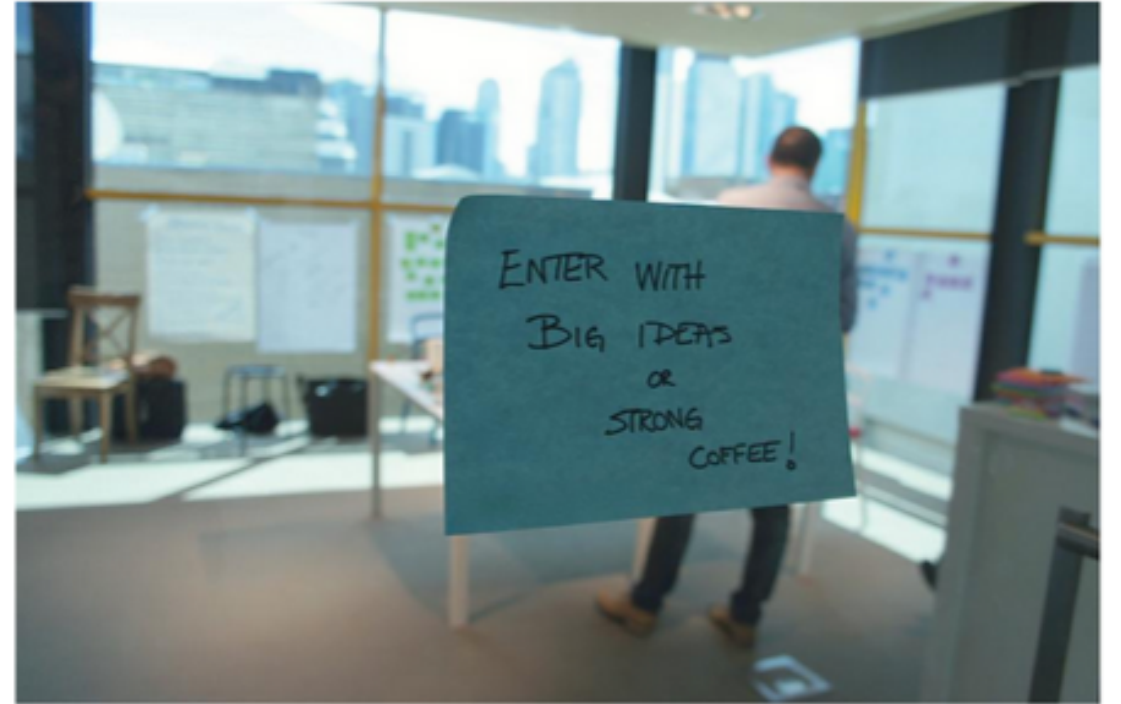
What is it about the space you are using that engages, draws people in, creates curiosity, and has elements of novelty or surprise? There is a good chance you are using the standard, generic meeting space—overcrowded with poor lighting. There is a large boardroom table and people can barely see each other. All they can do is look to the presenter at the front. Are the spaces you use designed for top-down events? These types of spaces are simply not conducive to engagement.

There is a great deal of available research devoted to meeting space dynamics. The research proves that in order to be productive, people need to meet in rooms that have enough space to comfortably move around and formulate smaller groups. High density rooms actually lead to lower participant achievement. It is difficult for people to listen, learn, and engage when they are uncomfortable due to temperature, lighting, outside distractions, or poorly designed furniture.

It is important to put thought into the space you use. You want space where people can rearrange the furniture to encourage group work and collaboration,

communication, and the sharing of ideas. Bigger windows actually lead to bigger thinking and idea exchanges. Flip charts should be easy to move around and supplies should be available and accessible. IT equipment—if used—should be set up, working, and ready to go. And you should have wall space to post completed work sheets.

These are just some ideas about space that works. For more information on space, you might like to read *Learning Spaces*, edited by Diana G. Oblinger.



SETTING THE STAGE FOR ENGAGEMENT

The way you open a workshop, event, or training day is important because it sets the stage for the entire session. If you have ever been to Disney Land you know how the experience starts long before you walk into the Magic Kingdom. They seem to think of everything, right from when you consider buying your tickets. Think about the trip to the park, the signs you see as you are approaching, the way the parking lot is designed, and how you remember where you parked your car. As you get closer you catch a small glimpse of the larger structures behind the walls. You can hear the music and feel the energy. You are in a great mood before you even get there.

Clearly these workshops are not a Disney vacation, but is there any reason you cannot deliver them in a way that considers and thinks about the customers' experience, captures the imagination, and builds some positive anticipation? While in the workshop design phase, you need to really think about the participants and how the day will look and feel to them. Here are some suggestions to get your sessions started on the right track. Once there you can keep things

moving through a seamless flow and exchange of information. Anticipation can build as you create a great ending celebration where everyone transfers the ideas and concepts from short-term memory into long-term memory, ready to recall as needed.

These ideas will help your event, meeting, workshop, or training messages stick with the participants long after the session ends.

GETTING READY 2-1: INVITATIONS

Why Use

Organizations usually send a memo to staff telling them where and when to show up for a training or workshop event, and they provide a brief overview. They do this because they have always done it this way. Some even go so far as to include a warning, such as, "I expect that you will be on time. This is a workday so be prepared to work." Does that sound inviting? Not really. In fact, anyone who receives this memo is likely to wake up on the day of the event and think, "Ugh, I have to go in for that?" This is exactly what we want to avoid, but traditional supervisors may not understand this point. They may, in fact, think that if people are having fun they are not working. We know the opposite is true.



Do not be fooled into thinking that if someone wants an applied play workshop they are willing to change all the old rules. They may just be starting to realize they need to get more innovation in the door and have heard something positive about you, yet they may not be truly aligned. But if they are hiring you for an applied play workshop—a great first step forward—maybe this is a good time to suggest they try something new.

Write an invitation for the session. Make it something a bit more fun, something that piques the imagination. Create some excitement for participants. Create a pathway so they look forward to attending.

When to Use

Pre-Conference

Resources

If you are using email, you simply need to find a puzzle or quiz to use in a fun template—there are countless invitation templates available on the Internet.

Time

This activity is prep work on your part, so the level of thought and effort you are willing to commit to will determine the amount of time you need.

Group Size

Any

Instructions

Mail each participant something tangible that relates directly to the workshop or learning event. For example, if the session relates to teamwork include a puzzle piece in each invitation; the team members will have to contribute their individual pieces to complete the puzzle. If mailing or downloading objects is not an option, email each participant a written challenge to spark their interest in the session. Create a sense of anticipation; make them want to know the answers before they arrive. For example, send a list of questions of varying difficulty. Some will be easy to answer using a quick web search, while others may require more effort.

If the session is sufficiently important, consider calling each of the participants. This will make them feel important and valued before they even arrive. The conversation does not need to be long—it is just a way of showing each person that you value their attendance and that they will be able to achieve great outcomes by attending.

All these different ways of inviting participants also demonstrate your respect for

their time. You know they have busy agendas and this is one signal to them that you are focused on meeting the workshop outcomes. People really appreciate it when they know you are committed to making the time count.

GETTING READY 2-2: ADD MUSIC

Why Use

Not many workshops, training sessions, or offsites incorporate music. We do because we know music can change the mood of a room. We set the day's tone by playing music as people are walking into the room. We are selective when choosing the music we will play. Consider what the participants will enjoy, not just your own personal tastes. Think about the day's demographics and the type of music the participants are likely to appreciate. The wrong music can be more irritating than anything and you do not want such unwelcome distractions.

When to Use

Anytime you want to change the mood or set the stage for relaxation, thinking, or creativity. Basically, use music for conscious or unconscious messaging.

Resources

Speakers or a system to play music, a set list of appropriate music, and any device that holds your music.

Time

Time to prepare and select the music that fits the workshop.

Group Size

Any

Instructions

We play music as people enter the room, during breaks, and while they are working. You just need to think about when and where this is appropriate.

Additional Information

You might consider when you are playing the music, how you are playing it, and the message the music conveys. Music is very emotional and can have many connections. Make sure the sound system is appropriate, and that it is not too loud in one area and too quiet in another. You want background sound, but specifically for the stage of the workshop.

We like to select music to match the pace or stage of the workshop. We have set lists of music for thinking, creating, motivating, and energizing. Avoid music with words unless the words have some significant meaning or message.

During breaks or lunch you can have more fun. You might like to pick theme music to match the workshop message. For firefighters we have played “Burning Down the House” and for the medical community we have played “Coconut.” Be creative and have fun, you will get some smiles.

GETTING READY 2-3: GROUND RULES

Why Use

We do have ground rules for our workshops, but why deliver them in a way that sounds overly strict? You do not even need to read the ground rules until after the participants have started out with some fun. You can literally put the ground rules on the ground, so participants have to step over them as they walk into the room. Imagine people coming into the playroom and seeing “ground rules” on large sheets of flip chart paper on the floor. Right away, this sends a message that says, “Playful, fun, energy, different, novel, interesting.”

When to Use

For meetings or workshops, anytime you want to set the stage for the work you are about to do.

Resources

Flip chart paper, markers, tape

Time

10 minutes—prep time

Group Size

Any

Instructions

Here are some examples of ground rules you might use:

1. Bring an open mind
2. Be on time
3. Listen generously
4. Speak from the heart
5. No electronics
6. Everyone participates

Variation

You can also put a sign on the door that says something like:

- Smile, you are here now.
- Welcome to the playroom/playground/play station
- Smart people work here, there you are!
- Wanted: Real people with untapped brilliance, that's you!

Be creative and say anything that makes people feel wanted, appreciated, cared for, and that sparks their imaginations.

It is also worthwhile inviting the group to contribute other ground rules that might be important to them. For example, sometimes people have concerns about cellphones. Should they be switched off totally or can they be set to vibrate. Take into account all the needs of the group; sometimes there are critical personal or business matters that may need urgent attention.

GETTING READY 2-4: THE GUEST SPEAKER

Why Use

There may be occasions when a senior member of the executive team or a subject matter expert needs to open your session. They might be required to do so in order to set the scene or even to provide some crucial information. Sometimes you may be obliged to open a session with a few words from a senior executive or from a subject matter expert. This can be a surefire way of disengaging everyone because the guests are rarely great presenters.

When to Use

The company may require management to show up to welcome the group to demonstrate how important the meeting is. They may also need to review the day's events after the session. The speaker may be an external individual who has data or research that is critical for the meeting.

Resources

Depending on the group's size, the speaker may need audiovisual equipment.

Time

Dependent on the group's needs.

Group Size

2+

Instructions

It is essential to brief the guest speaker before the event. Let them know about the purpose of the meeting and ensure they know who will be in the room. If possible, determine what they are going to be saying and, more importantly, how they will be saying it. There is nothing worse than kicking off by letting a speaker drain the energy from the room by reading from a long script, accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation. If this is the case, see if you can switch things around and do a high energy opener. Then invite the guest speaker to present. Alternatively, invite them before a lunch or tea break as a closer, so the group can refresh during the break.

If possible, convert the presentation into a question and answer session. You or another individual can conduct the interview before opening it up to the floor. This is a far more engaging way of encouraging the guest speaker to share their stories and learnings. This is the ideal way for a guest speaker to contribute a great deal to a session. Ask tables—or at least pairs—to spend a few minutes formulating questions. Then invite each table or pair to ask their questions. Check in with the group about the comments and further questions, and ask the

group to summarize the key points to ensure they have been active listeners.

Additional Information

A great guest speaker makes a great closer to encourage people to leave the session on a high note. Where possible, take control over the selection of the guest speaker. This allows you to create a meaningful experience for the group. An individual who can share important lessons or research will inspire the participants.

ACTIVITY 2-I: FACE CLUB

Why Use

You may have been to a number of workshops or conferences where you make your own name tag with art supplies like glitter glue and stickers. Making a name tag is fun but when you are done, that is it. This variation makes creating names tags a lot more fun. It copies the very popular Facebook concept of gathering and posting information about yourself to connect to others and to be able to put a face to a name.

Many people hate going to events, especially if they arrive and find they do not know many of the others in attendance. This activity makes that awkward first arrival a lot more enjoyable, and it makes it easier to meet others.

When to Use

At the beginning of a workshop, networking event, or conference.

Resources

Craft paper, string, tape, stickers, magazine pictures, pipe cleaners, other craft materials of your choosing.

Time

15 – 45 minutes

Group Size

Any

Instructions

Place a large selection of art supplies and magazines on tables—we often cut out pictures ahead of time so they are ready to use. You also need tape and glue so the participants can create their name tags. People may not consider themselves to be creative, but as soon as they see the stickers and art supplies they start making things.

Create a cardboard template with boxes that are large enough for people to draw pictures, or add stickers and/or magazine photos. Each box will contain a piece of information about the individual:

- Name
- Pets/Kids
- Favorite Movie
- Favorite Book
- Job/Hobby

- Favorite Color
- Favorite Game as a Child
- Why I Came Here Today
- Favorite Holiday Location
- One thing I really want to do in life is...
- My home town is...

Create two holes at the top and tie on a length of string so the name tag can be worn as a necklace. If people do not know each other, this activity gives them something to do while everyone is arriving. It is a great networking activity for people who are a bit on the shy side.

Tell people to wear their name tags as a necklace when they are done. When it looks like everyone is wearing their name tag, ask them to find three people they have something in common with. They will have to walk around and read each other's name tags, asking questions. They will soon discover they have something in common with everyone.



ACTIVITY 2-2: MY SOUNDTRACK

Why Use

Introductions, making connections, more fun

When to Use

Anytime

Resources

Smartphones or any music device

Time

10 minutes

Group Size

Any

Instructions

Internet access may be useful for this activity. Ask the participants to each find a song they consider a favorite, either on their smartphones or the Internet. Everyone then finds a partner and introduces themselves using the music. They may

even want to use music videos if they can find them. After the pairs have listened to each other's songs they ask their partners questions. We usually write these simple questions on a PowerPoint slide or flip chart:

What do you like about that song?

How does it make you feel when you hear it?

What memory comes to mind when you hear it?

Debrief: What did you learn about your partner that was interesting or surprising?

ACTIVITY 2-3: SMARTPHONE INTRODUCTION

Why Use

People are always getting in trouble for being on their smartphones. This opener is fun because we ask people to take out their smartphones.

When to Use

Anytime you like. Even people who know each other well love this activity.

Resources

Smartphones

Time

15 minutes

Group Size

Any

Instructions

Tell the participants to take out their smartphones and find a photo of their house, family, dog, cat, child, car, or backyard, anything that shows something

about their life. Ask everyone to find a friend and show them their photo and tell them about themselves. Remind the partners to listen generously and ask open-ended questions about the photo or anything key they hear.

After about three minutes, switch roles—it is important everyone gets a chance to share. If you have an uneven number of people the facilitator can also partner up with someone to tell their story. Next, have two groups pair up together so you have everyone working in groups of four. This time the partners will take turns introducing each other to their new group mates.

Debrief: What did you learn about your partner? Why is that interesting? Did you feel your partner listened to you?



ACTIVITY 2-4: 60 SECONDS OF LOVE

Why Use

This is a fun opener to get the group into a great mood. Now “love” might not be the best word to use with people who do not speak English. However, we have found this to be a positive game even with the most conservative of people.

When to Use

When you want people to be appreciative, to break down barriers, to change the mood, to increase connections.

Resources

Timer tool to measure 1 minute

Time

1.5 minutes per person

Group Size

Any

Instructions

Seat participants at tables in equal numbers—as close as possible. One at a time, each person at the table says “I love.....” and then finishes the statement.

So it might sound like:

I love apples.

I love my children.

I love my house.

I love my hometown.

I love chocolate.

I love my puppy, Joe.

I love playing cards with my kids.

I love taking my girls to school.

I love reading decorating magazines.

This goes on for one minute. Then you can debrief by asking everyone how they felt before, during, and after, and if they learned anything new about the people at their table.

Variation

“_____ makes me happy”

The same rules apply, but this time the participants get to say what makes them happy.

At the end, for fun, you can play a catchy tune like “Happiness” or “My Favorite Things.”



ACTIVITY 2-5: SPEED NETWORKING AND INTRODUCTIONS

Why Use

This is one of our all-time favorite opening activities. It avoids the standard routine of asking people to introduce themselves.

When to Use

Use this activity if you will be with a group for more than one day. It is fun and gets people moving. It also helps people to connect, particularly if they have not met previously.

Timing

This activity takes a little longer than a standard roll call.

Group Size

This activity requires a minimum of 10 – 12 people to be effective.

Instructions

Invite everyone to take a business card sized piece of paper and write down some key points about themselves, as though they are going on a speed dating

evening. Use tape to make a line along the floor and then split the group in half and line them up on both sides of the tape, facing each other. Designate one person at the head of the line as the anchor—they do not move. If the headcount is uneven, you will need to be the anchor.

Keep a tight watch on time and allow one minute for the individuals on one side of the line to introduce themselves to the people they are facing. Ring a bell or press a buzzer, or simply shout out, “Switch!” and allow the other side to introduce themselves. After another minute shout out, “Move along!” and each person shuffles over one spot so they are facing someone new. Repeat the process until everyone has met.

Debrief questions:

- What did you learn about the other people in the room?
- What interesting facts emerged? What did you notice?
- Why do you think we commenced the session with this activity? Make links to some learning outcomes from the session.

ACTIVITY 2-6: WHO AM I?

Why Use

This is a great way of introducing yourself to the group if they have never met you. It provides everyone an opportunity to have a laugh and also to share key messages, depending on how you conduct the debrief.

When to Use

Use when people are not familiar with you as a manager or facilitator. This is an excellent activity for an induction program or to start a longer workshop or seminar with teams who might not normally work together. If you follow the variation you will be able to do this with anyone who is new to a team and needs a gentle, informal introduction.

Resources

Flipchart paper and pens

Time

5 – 10 minutes, depending on the level of debriefing

Group Size

2 +

Instructions

Do not formally introduce yourself to the group. Commence by asking the group to guess the answers to some questions relating to your own experiences, personal and business. As the group responds to your questions write their answers on the flipchart.

Examples of suitable questions:

- What is my name?
- Where was I born?
- Where do I live?
- What car do I drive?
- How many years have I worked in this field/at this company?
- What is my favorite food?
- What is my favorite TV show/movie/book?
- How many pets do I have?
- What was my first job?

After you have written down the various responses on to the flipchart, tick off and confirm the correct ones. Provide a few additional details if you would like.

Have a laugh about the incorrect answers and provide the correct information about yourself.

Additional Information

You can do this activity simply as an introductory part of the session or you can choose to debrief it with the group. Several key messages may emerge as the participants reflect on how and why they responded as they did.

The debrief links to:

- The importance of first impressions. People gain information about you without you even opening your mouth to speak.
- The danger of making assumptions. We sometimes take this information and make huge, often inaccurate, assumptions about people without checking to see if we are basing our perceptions on facts.

Variation

If a new team member joins the group, invite them to do a “Who am I” with the existing team; ask the same types of questions. Invite the group to take a guess at the answers and then ask the new team member to respond and provide their answers.

ACTIVITY 2-7: FEEDBACK FORMS

Why Use

This activity is not only tied to your outcome measurements, but it also encourages 100% engagement.

When to Use

Hand this form out early in the session, people need to read the form at the beginning of the day and they are welcome to add their comments on the form as the day unfolds. Then collect the forms after the afternoon break. Nothing is worse than ending a great day by announcing that everyone needs to complete a form. It can take the high of the day to a quick low.

Resources

A simple form with questions for feedback, and pens for each person.

Time

10-15 minutes

Group Size

Any

Instructions

When participants review the form they will see they are rating not only your session, the content, and the room, but they are also rating their personal involvement and that of their teammates. This simple form reminds people that you—the facilitator, trainer, leader—are not there to entertain and serve but to guide. It is also their responsibility to participate and take responsibility for the outcome.

ACTIVITY 2-8: MAKE AND CREATE

Why Use

When you enable a group to engage with a topic in a hands-on, minds-on way, you immediately notice a different energy in the room that creates surprising outputs. There has been a great deal of research into the value of individuals and groups building, designing, drawing, painting, and sketching their own creations in response to a question. Not only is this an appropriate way to kick off a conference or offsite event, it is equally suitable for smaller meetings.

When to Use

Use this approach when you want to discuss intangible topics such as your values, your vision or different viewpoints in the room. It is perfect for sessions where you need people to contribute better and different ideas for solving broad problems.

We have used this activity in situations where groups:

- Needed to refresh their values and then link them to behaviors;
- Wanted everyone to commit to their set vision for the year;
- Were starting a new project and wanted to paint the project's successful

outcome.

*This method is not suitable for times when you can find factual answers through research or when you are, for example, planning your budget or setting key performance areas for team members.

Resources

After you select the method you are going to use, you need a toolkit of suitable resources. Here are some examples:

- If you are going to make use of clay or play dough, ensure you have bought a sufficient number of boxes for each table in the room. Buy good quality and also make sure there are cleaning supplies for people to wash their hands.
- If you are going to paint with the team, purchase a sufficient supply of materials from an arts and craft store, including canvases, brushes, easy-to-use paints, templates, pencils to try things out, glitter, and anything else the store suggests to include in your kit. You will need some form of apron or covering to help people protect their clothes. Gloves might also be necessary, as well as drop cloths to protect tables and carpets.

Time

Allow at least one hour for this activity, maybe even two. It depends on the nature of the question you are asking and how much time you would like to allow for a debrief.

Group Size

5+

Instructions

Decide if you will give the participants any clue as to what to expect. You may want to advise them to wear comfortable shoes and casual clothes they do not mind getting dirty or that they can have dry cleaned. Ensure you lay out the room carefully before people arrive. It is a good idea to have a table for all the materials, such as the clay or paints, so people can easily access the tools they need. We cover tables with sheeting or newspaper to prevent any damage.

As participants enter the room position them at their tables; determine how you want to mix up the group based on company team or division. Then set the scene. Explain the purpose of the session and what you would like to achieve by its end. Explain that you have chosen to “make and create” during the session to see where the artworks lead and what emerges from thinking in a very different way. Make it very clear that the actual art is not what is important. Even the

modern museums of art have paintings that do not appear—at first glance—to be more than blank canvases or a few attractive lines painted on a bland background.



Get everyone started with a warm-up activity. This could be anything that allows the group to try out the paints. You might challenge everyone to see how many

circles they can paint in one minute, as a group. Another option is to pair up the participants and ask everyone to paint a portrait of their partner, in two minutes. When the time is up they share their paintings with their partners.

When you are ready for the real thing, set an appropriate amount of time and set them loose. Watch to make sure everyone is participating and allow them to ask questions. Make an announcement at the halfway point, and again when there are only 10 minutes remaining. Ask everyone to sign their names on or next to their artwork.

You will ask each group to present their creation; you might want to videotape the presentations. Both the facilitators and participants can ask questions, which will help to start discussions. The designers will provide further information. The artwork can then be displayed in the workplace, if possible, as a temporary or permanent display. The groups may want to write an explanation of their art to post alongside it.

Additional Information

An activity like this can take an entire day, depending on the depth to which you go in the questioning time. It can also be an individual project rather than a team project if you would like individuals to explore the meaning of things for

themselves.

Variation

Instead of painting you can ask participants to create collages. You will need many magazines, newspapers, and other arts and crafts items, as well as scissors, glue, and pens and pencils. The team then designs something on a sheet of paper or in a book format in response to your question.

Possible questions:

- Where do you see yourself in your career in the next three years?
- What is the ideal state of your team by the end of the year?
- What would you like your key achievements to be?
- How would you depict your journey to success over the next year?

Another option is to debrief the whole activity as a team builder. The debrief would revolve around questions such as:

- How well did the team operate while the make and create activity was underway?
- What worked well and what could we have done differently?
- How will our new knowledge about each other assist us in our workplace?

As the facilitator, you will also provide feedback on your observations and ask further questions to encourage the team to introspect and become more aware of their behaviors and communication styles.



ACTIVITY 2-9: DRAW A TABLEMATE

Why Use

To introduce the idea of imagination and creativity.

When to Use

This is a nice introduction to innovation and innovative thinking but it can be used anywhere you need to point out that everyone is creative.

Materials

Blank paper, pens or markers, and tables for writing and drawing.

Time

15 minutes

Instructions

Ask the participants to take five minutes and draw a picture/portrait of the person sitting next to them. They will sign the picture when they are finished and then give it to their subject.

People tend to moan and complain during this exercise. They apologize as they

hand the art to the person they drew. You can use this to talk about how when we are children we all know we are artists, creators, and makers. We create art for the fun of the creation. As we get older we move into a new stage of development. Somewhere along the way we enter into a stage of comparing. During this stage we decide that our end product is not as good as it should be as we compare ourselves to others. We then begin to deselect and decide we are not creative. We carry these ideas into our adult lives and begin to take fewer risks, use our imaginations less, and narrow our thinking and live in the safe zone. We know that creativity and imagination are directly connected to problem solving and that resiliency is linked to solving problems.

ACTIVITY 2-10: THE X FACTOR

Why Use

This is an excellent and fun activity that works best when the session or meeting is fairly long. It helps to lighten the mood and also shows people just how creative they can be.

When to Use

This is a great activity if people have been sitting for a long time or you need to lighten the mood. Avoid it if you have participants who are very stuffy and traditional.

Resources

You can also provide additional props or people can create their own props using their bags and things they find in the room. If you do provide props, you can place items such as scarves, masks, theatrical props, balls, and toys into a box for the participants to use as they choose.

Time

Keep it short and sharp. Allow 3 – 4 minutes—a maximum of 5—for preparation and 1 minute for each team to present back to the larger group.

Group Size

This works best in a large room and with more than 15 participants.

Instructions

Form teams that are a mix of the different departments, as well as age, culture, and gender—if possible. Ask the teams to think about the X Factor show on TV, or any talent show they may have witnessed or participated in. You are asking them to sum up the session, their learnings, and the takeaways in an X Factor-style presentation. It can take many forms, including a:

- Song or a rap;
- advertisement;
- Jingle, rhythm, or rhyme;
- Short play or pantomime;
- Story with props.

Every team member must participate in some way. Set a time limit and observe the groups as they prepare. When the time is up, the teams take turns presenting to the larger group.

Additional Information

Depending on the session's context, you can extend this activity in many ways.

You can make it play out longer by encouraging the teams to use their acting skills to create a more detailed performance. This is a way of encouraging improvisational skills and helping people to think on their feet. The ability to think in a flexible way is linked to building resilience in the face of change.

Variation

You can have a judging panel and award prizes for the most original presentations.



ACTIVITY 2-II: WHAT'S THE SAME OR DIFFERENT?

Why Use

To help a new group meet each other fast and get to know each other quickly. It is also fun and a nice way to get people talking as a group.

When to Use

Use with any group as even groups who know each other will enjoy this and usually always learn something that they did not know about the others.

Resources

Timing tool to keep track of time. Flip chart paper and markers are optional.

Time

15-20 minutes

Group Size

Groups of 6 - 8 people

Instructions

In your group, please have a discussion and find something everyone has in

common. It cannot be obvious, like we all work or live here. Then have each person tell the group something about themselves that is really unique and different. For example, someone may have been in a Mexican jail while another may have been born on a subway. Everyone has something.

Additional Information

When they are finished, have each group pick a presenter to talk about what the group members have in common. The presenter will also talk about the team member who everyone agreed had the most interesting story.



ACTIVITY 2-12: LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® TOWER

Why Use

To get people thinking with their hands, to encourage storymaking and telling, to encourage networking, and to appreciate diversity.

Building LEGO® models can be great openers. People can build a simple tower then use their model to introduce themselves to others. If we have a large group we might ask the participants to introduce themselves to two or three other people in the room. You can add another layer of fun by asking them to either get a new person's business card or to find someone with whom they have a shared commonality through their model stories. Or you can ask that participants find and meet someone whose model is identical to theirs.

When to Use

When you want to get engagement with some hard fun.

Resources

LEGO® mini exploration bags or random bricks, with one Minifigure per person.

Time

30 minutes

Group Size

Any

Instructions

We usually make the Minifigures ahead of time to make it easier for people to see them, but if you have not you might say something like, “Find a Minifigure. He has pants, a shirt, and a yellow head. Now look for a baseplate, which is a flat square brick.” We show an example and say, “Please build a tower. You have about three minutes.”

During the building of the tower, people may ask questions such as, “How many bricks do we use?” or, “How high does this need to be?” Do not respond to the questions. They will quickly see you are not giving any information. We often wait for the towers to be at least 50% complete and then we announce, “30 seconds left to finish.”

Everyone now has a tower. You can ask questions like:

- Who was building for height?
- Who was building for stability?

Different people will raise their hands. This is a great opportunity to speak about interpretation of instructions or assumptions. Now you might ask if anyone thought their LEGO® man was doing anything. There is usually someone who will have a story about this. After the story, ask the group to make a change to their model to create a story about something general. The story could be about the city where you are or the company they work for.

Now it is time for everyone to tell their stories. Ask everyone to stand up and find a partner to share stories with, and then switch partners after one minute. After the first set of stories, ask the participants to change partners. You can continue like this for a while. When you debrief you can ask how many people changed or modified their stories along the way.

Additional Information

In this process it is important that everyone builds with LEGO®—we have a rule that there are no observers. It is also important that everyone tells their story. If we ask someone to make something, they must share the story that goes with their model.

Variations

Activity: The Award

This is an extension of the tower build. But remember to follow the previous rules: everyone builds, everyone gives meaning to their models, and everyone makes and tells a story. Ask the participants to modify their towers, this time making an award they have just received. They have to build the award so we can learn about it. Follow the storymaking process above.

Activity: The Best Vacation

Ask people to modify their towers to be about a fantastic vacation. It just happened, they just came back from their holiday. They can tell where they went, what made the holiday so great, who they might have met, and how going on the holiday changed how they feel or think. Follow the same story making process above.

Activity: My Dream Job

Ask people to modify their towers to be about their dream jobs. Encourage everyone to exaggerate so you can have fun and get some great stories going. Follow the same story making process above.



ACTIVITY 2-13: LEARNING JOURNAL

Why Use

To give extroverts time to reflect and think and to give introverts space to integrate information while the room is quiet.

When to Use

When you want people to be reflective and quiet. Many of the activities we use are extroverted so participants will appreciate the inclusion of reflection time in the processes. You can insert reflective writing anywhere you like. In the rules of engagement based on neuroscience, individual writing is better than listening. In other words, people are more engaged when they are writing something down than when they are listening to other people talk.

Resources

Small notebooks and pens

Time

Any amount of time you want, 15 minutes is a good length. The timing should not be too long or too short. You want to ensure engagement and interest. You do not want people to start making their shopping lists.

Group Size

Any

Instructions

Please take out your journal and write anything you want about today, this process, or our discussion. It can be about something you learned, something you noticed, something you want to remember, something you need to vent about—anything you like. No one else will read this so enjoy some time with yourself for 15 minutes.

ACTIVITY 2-14: MESSAGE FOR YOU!

Why Use

This is a fun way to get people thinking about something they can change.

When to Use

When you want people to think in a different way and you want to push the boundaries while still giving them control over the topic and how they might apply a change process.

Resources

Index cards with random quotes from things such as songs, poems, famous people, and parables.

Time

5 – 10 minutes, based on the level of debriefing

Group Size

2+

Instructions

Randomly place cards face down on a table. Ask participants to think of something they want to change. It needs to be something in their control, like their behavior or how they think or feel about something. Maybe they need a new quote or parable to help them complete an upcoming challenge.

Tell the participants to pick a card, and then sit and think about how the message relates to their situation. Give them one minute to write down their ideas.

Have the group work in pairs, where they swap cards to get their partner's interpretation. Make sure both people get a turn. While one partner is talking the other should take notes, listening for words or anything that sparks their imagination.

Now with the new information from their partner, have them add to their ideas and converge these into a new slogan or message they want to remember and carry forward. It is up to you if you want them to report back or not. This is a nice activity to add to a learning journal.

ACTIVITY 2-15: SILENT LISTENING

Why Use

To improve communication, increase engagement, and help with connections.

When to Use

When people do not know each other well and you want to build more community.

Resources

None

Time

10 minutes

Group Size

Any

Instructions

Find a partner who you do not know very well. Pick who will go first. The first person speaks while the other listens. The listener stays silent and tries to

maintain a neutral facial expression. The speaker gets five uninterrupted minutes to talk about anything they like.

Set the timer and say, “Start.” Announce, “Stop,” when the time is up.

The partners now switch roles. After they are done you move on to the debrief questions

For the speaker: How did it feel to talk uninterrupted for five minutes?

For the listener: How did it feel to listen without talking, commenting, or nodding? What did you learn about yourself in this process? What did you learn about listening? What did you learn about being silent?



ACTIVITY 2-16: YOUTUBE VIDEO CLIPS

Why Use

There are a number of amazing short videos we like that are easily available on the Internet. They might only last for about three minutes each but they can set the tone for the day.

When to Use

If we use a video, and we often do, we make sure it has multiple teachable messages. Here are some examples:

- Flash mobs: Engagement, team work, preparation, customer service
- Nature: Leadership, teamwork, bullying, cooperation
- Sports: Leadership, maturity, trust, integrity
- Dance: Leadership, followship, engagement, movement, trends

Resources

Projector, screen or wall, computer, Internet access, all plugs and attachments, and selected clips.

Time

Most good video clips are only a few minutes long. About three minutes seems to

be a good length, but it depends on the clip.

Group Size

Any

Instructions

Come up with a very short introduction. Play the clip, then debrief. The debrief is the important part.

Debrief the video well to ensure the group does, in fact, understand why you showed it and how it relates to their program. Ask the group questions such as:

- What did you make of the video? How did you understand it?
- Why did we include the video at the start of the session?
- How does the video relate to our topic today?

We also send the link to the organizers or include it in the report at the end of the session so they can rewatch the clip later.

Variation

The possibilities are endless. Just remember, when you use a clip give credit to the owner. Even though it is free on the Internet it is important for viewers to see where it came from and for you to acknowledge the creator.

Special Note

Videos are also a fabulous way to engage participants before the session begins. People do not mind watching short videos that link directly to the theme of the

event and a quick search through YouTube provides endless videos on key words.

ACTIVITY 2-17: SET EXPECTATIONS

Why Use

To have a sense of who is in the room and what they expect to learn by the time they exit the room at the end of the session.

When to Use

When you suspect your plans may differ from the participants' expectations.

Resources

Sticky notes, pens, flip charts/wall space

Instructions

Version 1

Give each participant a stack of sticky notes and ask them to write out their expectations about the session, one item per sticky note. Then instruct everybody to stick their notes up on the wall or a flip chart. Read the notes and cluster them by key themes—you can do this yourself or have the participants do it as a group project. This gets everyone actively involved in structuring their own learning so they can realize their expectations. Also, this teaches them the management skill of developing an *affinity map* from a collection of ideas that are collated into

central themes.

NOTE: This version of an opener can also be used as a closer by replacing “expectations” with “learnings” or “commitments.”

Version 2

Provide the participants with an overview of the session and let them know where you are headed. Tape these key messages around the room as posters—you can use flip chart pages. Give the participants sticky notes to write out their questions and or challenges regarding the message—they can do this individually or as groups. Allow enough time for everyone to make it around the room. Debrief by inviting participants to read the notes out loud. This allows you to tailor the session to their needs by addressing their concerns. It will also help to maintain the participants’ interest.

Version 3

As participants enter the room, ask them to take a playing card. You can be holding the cards or have them placed face down on a table. The people will draw either a heart, spade, club, or diamond. You can also draw your own shapes and invite people to choose one of the shapes. People with matching cards or shapes will be on a team together.

Assign a flipchart or a whiteboard area to each shape or playing card type. Call for a team leader of that group—perhaps the person with the best handwriting. The group stands around the chart, discussing what they want to get out of the day and what would benefit them most by attending the session.

After 5 – 7 minutes, invite each team leader to share the group’s key ideas with the room. There are many benefits to this activity. It gives the participants a sense of control over the session format. It also encourages participation by making everyone feel included. The leader benefits by gaining experience and confidence by presenting in a no-risk environment. And you, the facilitator, get a strong sense of the group’s requirements.



ACTIVITY 2-18: MUSIC TO GENERATE IDEAS

Why Use

When you need more ideas to solve a problem.

When to Use

During a problem solving session.

Resources

Speakers and any music device, plus connection cords; pens and paper.

Time

10 – 20 minutes

Group size

Any

Instructions

Beforehand, you will create a list of songs to play for the group; go for variety by choosing different genres and time periods. Ask everyone to write down the question or problem they are working on at the top of a sheet of paper. Ask them

to let their minds freely explore the music and write down any words or emotions or anything that comes to mind from the music they hear. Play different music from your set list. Ask people to find a partner and switch sheets. Each person works on their partner's question or problem statement, creating multiple ideas using the words they find.

The switching of sheets allows for additional new and fresh information to enter into the situation. When the partners have a list of ideas—go for quantity and wild, crazy ideas—then they switch the papers back. The problem or question owner now works on their own sheet to see if they can build on their partner's ideas.



ADD MOVEMENT—SITTING IS THE NEW SMOKING

It can be a challenge to get people to sit and listen right after lunch. Here are some strategies we use to engage participants and charge the room with energy. The term energizer is popular in the facilitation industry, but we do not like to use it. We feel it is disrespectful because it implies that people are dragging. Instead, we like to use the term opener. You do need some space to play these games. So remember the rule to use a room that is large enough to hold twice the number of people you have booked.

People think better when they are moving because blood flows to their brains. And research is showing just how important it is to incorporate regular movement into everyday life. Many of us spend long hours at a desk, which then puts us at an increased risk for some very serious health conditions, including cancer and heart disease. Sitting really is the new smoking.

ACTIVITY 3-1: WALK AND TALK

Why Use

To get people walking and thinking and to divide people into small groups of two, which can be really helpful for introverts who need space to speak.

When to Use

Anytime you want to help people integrate information.

Resources

None, just a large space for people to move around. If there is access to outside walking space and the weather is nice, people will love you for assigning this activity.

Time

10 – 20 minutes, plus 10 minutes for the debrief

Group Size

A minimum of two people

Instructions

Find a partner and walk together for about 15 minutes. Please be back in this room at _____time. Make sure you both take an equal amount of time to talk and exchange your ideas.

After everyone has returned you can do any number of things:

1. Have the partners write out their discussion on a flip chart to present back to the larger group.
2. Ask the participants to do an individual reflection or write notes in their book.
3. Break the participants into groups of four and ask them to exchange ideas with each other to get a cross-pollination of ideas.

If you use the third approach you can have each person present their partner's ideas. This helps people feel validated and it also promotes good listening. Ask the teams to find a creative way to present their ideas back to the larger group.



ACTIVITY 3-2: GROUP DOODLE NETWORKING

Why Use

This is another great activity that shows how large groups are interconnected.

When to Use

To help people see the interconnections within a group and to get people thinking about themselves in relation to others.

Resources

A large sheet of paper taped to the wall, sticky notes, Sharpie pens (medium)

Time

10 – 20 minutes

Group Size

20+

Instructions

Ask people to take a sticky note and write the following: their hometown, a hobby they enjoy, and a small doodle. You can modify these items as you like.

When everyone is done, have them post these on the paper on the wall. Then, using markers that do not bleed through the paper, have them make a connecting line to at least two or three other sticky notes where they see similarities. This creates a live networking event. You can also leave this sheet up and people will add to it during the break.

ACTIVITY 3-3: LINE GAME

Why Use

This is a fun movement game and is great for improving communication and connecting people.

When to Use

Anytime you need an activity to get people standing and moving.

Resources

Space

Time

10 minutes

Group Size

Any

Instructions

There are many ways to play this game. Choose a specific characteristic and ask people to line up accordingly. You may ask the participants to line up by:

- Alphabetical order of first names;
- Age;
- Years in the industry, working at the same company, or living in the same community;
- Shoe size;
- Height.

Variations

You can create a human scattergram using geographical locations, pointing out north and south. Point to the front of the room and say, "This is the North Pole." Then point out the South Pole and identify east and west. Then ask people to place themselves where they live or where they were born in relation to where they are at the workshop. The facilitator could be standing in Ohio. Where are you in relation to Ohio?

You can also ask the participants to close their eyes and then put themselves in order of height. This is a fun activity to watch.

ACTIVITY 3-4: THE TRIANGLE

Why Use

To explain things such as systems thinking and ecosystems, teams and organizations, and communities.

When to Use

Anytime you want to illustrate a system or you want to get people moving.

Resources

A large space

Time

10 – 20 minutes, with the debrief

Group Size

This game requires a sizeable group, a minimum of 20 participants is perfect. It is a great opener if the session will be dealing with systems or connections.

Instructions

Find a place on the floor, everyone needs to spread out wide. Do this in silence.

Without letting the other people know who you are, pick two people in the room. Eye them up. Now move so you are in an equilateral triangle with these people, meaning that the distance between you and the other two people is equal.

The room will spontaneously erupt into movement and laughter as people try to make a triangle. We usually hear people say things like:

- This is never going to work.
- Stop moving.
- How will this end?
- This is impossible?
- I'm not moving. I'm staying her. Okay, I'm moving.
- When will this be over?

The pattern usually goes like this. At first people race to try to make the triangle, then they complain they are not getting it right. Some might give up and say the things listed above. Then the movement slows down to a steady pace for a while. Just as it seems to settle, someone may move and set it into motion again. Then you will have a few small adjustments as people settle into a pattern and finally stop moving. The debrief on this is powerful because everyone has just illustrated organizational or system change, live in real time, in about 10 or 15 minutes. It is messy, complicated, uncomfortable, chaotic, unsettled, disappointing,

exciting, spontaneous, unmanageable, crazy, and silly. But there is a pattern. And like all systems it finds its balance. If you are interested in a really powerful debrief, you can videotape the activity and play it back to the room for observation and feedback.



GROUP SORTERS

Unfortunately, people often come to meetings, offsites, training, or conferences with the preconceived notion that the session will be a waste of their valuable time. People do not start their careers like this. But it is inevitable that at some point you will have negative people attending your sessions.

If you let people find their own seats negative people always manage to find each other and sit together, usually at the back of the room. A single table in the back can derail a session for the entire group, even a very large one. You can preempt this by assigning seats. This can be tricky but we have developed ideas that have served us well.

You might want to mix groups for cross-pollination or because you want new people to sit together. You might like to be disruptive and/or make points about things like change and adaptability or flexibility.

ACTIVITY 3-5: THE HUMMING GAME

Why Use

To add some unexpected fun and playfulness.

When to Use

When you want to mix people into small groups.

Resources

Song names printed on small slips of paper.

Time

10 – 15 minutes

Group Size

Any

Instructions

As people enter the room hand them a slip of paper. Tell them to read it but do not reveal what it says. The slips of paper are each printed with the name of a child-hood song that everyone should know, such as “Jingle Bells” or “Three

Blind Mice.”

Every person who gets the same song will be on a team. So if you have 20 participants and you want to create teams of 5, each song title will be on 5 slips of paper. Remember to hand out the slips in random order.

When everyone is present and accounted for, ask them to start humming their songs. As they hum they have to walk around and find the other people who are also humming the same song. No talking, no writing, no acting it out—just humming. When they find the other four people they sit at the same table.

People cannot help but laugh while playing this game because it is almost impossible to hum and listen at the same time. But when they finally find each other they are instantly happy to all “sing the same song.”

ACTIVITY 3-6: THE USED PEOPLE GAME

Why Use

To mix up groups and add some humor.

When to Use

After the participants have settled into their seats and introduced themselves.

Resources

Chairs

Time

15 – 30 minutes

Group Size

Any

Instructions

As the participants arrive, allow them to sit wherever they want. Give five minutes for the tablemates to introduce themselves to each other—one minute apiece. You might like to suggest they exchange business cards if this is a

networking event. Then tell them to look at the people at their table—these are now “used people.” They must now each find four different people to form a new group. After the new groups have formed and are sitting together, they repeat the process of introducing themselves to each other in a five minute time period.

Now everyone has eight new connections and hopefully some new business cards. The idea they were sitting with people who are now “used” is funny, and most people see the humor in changing and finding a brand new group of friends.



ACTIVITY 3-7: THIS OR THAT

Why Use

To get people moving and having fun.

When to Use

This is a fast-paced game that gets people up and moving, and changes the dynamics of the room.

Resources

Space to move around

Time

10 – 15 minutes

Group Size

Any

Instructions

You are going to move people around by calling out pairs. For example, if you say, “Chocolate or vanilla,” the people who pick chocolate will move to the area

you have designated for chocolate, while those who choose vanilla will go to the vanilla section of the room. Call out more pairs to get people moving until you are satisfied the group is well sorted. You will then ask people to count off—1, 2, 3, 4, 5—going up to the number of groups you are forming. If there will be five groups the count ends at five and starts over with the next person. Everyone with the same number will be on a team together.

Here are some of the pairs we like to use:

- City/Country
- Winter/Summer
- Quiet night at home/Night on the town
- Book/Movie
- Radio/Television
- Fly/Train
- Sports car/Pickup truck
- Stripes/Solids
- Sweet/Savory

ACTIVITY 3-8: THE HUMAN BAR CHART

Why Use

To sort groups

When to Use

When you want to have mixed tables

Resources

Pictures on flip charts or walls

Time

5 minutes

Group Size

Any

Instructions

As participants come into the room ask them to vote for something that is a favorite, preference, or interest. You can write words onto a flip chart or use large photographs of things like holiday destinations, chocolate bars, cars, or subject

topics/ interest areas they want to develop. Tell people they can cast their votes by standing in front of their pick. You will determine your group sizes beforehand. As an example, we will say you are assembling groups of five. As soon as you have five people in front of a chart they become a group. The remaining participants must choose from the other charts. Do this until everyone is in a group.

ACTIVITY 3-9: THE COLOR GAME

Why Use

To sort groups

When to Use

When you want groups to be mixed

Resources

LEGO® bricks in a variety of colors, a different color for each team

Time

5 minutes

Group Size

Any

Instructions

As participants enter the room have them pick up a LEGO® brick. You will have just enough for one brick per person, and one of each color for yourself. After everyone has made their selection take your bricks and place one on each table.

Your placement determines where the different teams will sit. Everyone who has the same colored brick will be working together.

ACTIVITY 3-10: ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS CONTEST

Why Use

To add some fun and excitement and to get the group feeling positive about being together.

When to Use

When you come back from a break or anytime the group needs to have some fun.

Resources

Space to move around

Time

10 – 15 minutes

Group Size

Any

Instructions

Ask one person to stand at the front of the room and demonstrate this with you.

After everyone understands how to play the game, explain that we are having a contest. The instructions go like this:

Find a partner and play rock, paper, scissors. Play three times and keep going if you have a tie. When you have a winner, the loser then becomes the winner's biggest fan and the two of you must find a new team to challenge. Whoever wins that round gets the entire cheering section from both teams. Keep going around the room until you have one ultimate winner. At the very end the entire room should be cheering for two people playing the game.

Additional Information

This is a loud and noisy game. But even with a huge room it does not take that long to play and the energy of the room will skyrocket. Get your camera ready because you will have lots of smiling faces, clapping, cheering, and heroes.

Variation

Some people add other features like Lizard, Spock, which makes the game more complicated. If you choose to do this, the instructions are on the Internet.



ACTIVITY 3-II: THE HUMAN TREASURE HUNT

Version 1

Why Use

It is simple and has a whole range of different possibilities in terms of how it plays out.

When to Use

At any point in the session when you need movement in the room or when people have just been sitting for way too long.

Resources

Sheets of paper with preprinted questions, pens

Time

5 – 7 minutes, depending on group size

Group Size

Any large group

Instructions

Each participant will receive a sheet of paper that describes different people they need to find. They may need to find a person who:

Has the greatest number of siblings;

Has the most unusual pet;

Has worked in their organization for the longest period of time;

Will describe who or what they would take if stranded on a desert island;

Enjoys a specific musical genre;

Has eaten something unusual.

Everyone will need to take a pen and their sheet of paper as they move about and interact with the group, jotting down the names of those they find to complete their treasure hunt.

For the debrief, ask who they found in the room and what they learned about each other. Also, ask what they found interesting and what surprised them.

Additional information

You can design questions that are more specific or relevant to your topic or theme. For example, if you are facilitating a session on leadership, your questions can be tailored to what people's views are on leadership, who they consider

to be a great world leader—past or present—and what they think their leadership style is.

Version 2

Why Use

It is simple and has a whole range of different possibilities in terms of how it plays out.

When to Use

When you want to sum up the learnings from a session or you want to introduce a new topic. You can vary the questions and link them to the learning area you are covering.

Resources

Blank paper, pens

Time

5 – 10 minutes, depending on group size and depth of questions

Group Size

Any

instructions

Participants must take their blank page and pen as they walk around the room and ask the other participants questions, such as:

What is the one big tip that you can give me about...

I want to get better at ... What suggestions do you have for me?

What is the one big thing you learned from the previous module and how will you apply that learning back at work?

What are you going to commit to doing differently when you return to work?

For the debrief, participants share some of the ideas they found or the experiences others described. Find links to the key messages of the session you are facilitating.

ACTIVITY 3-12: THE FIELD TRIP

Why Use

Simply changing the environment is an easy way to ensure you include new

ideas in the session.

When to Use

This is a great opener or closer because it avoids the “slumber hour” and reinvigorates participants through a simple change in scenery.

*Unless workplace safety issues are at stake, there is real value in allowing people to move outside of the meeting space. There is no rule—written or unwritten—that all meetings and sessions must take place in entirety in one specific location. This is particularly good to remember if the meeting will be longer than one hour.

Resources

You will need areas outside the main meeting space where people can go for a walk. Check first to be sure the group can exit the room without disturbing others in the organization.

Time

This is dependent on the field trip activity and the time necessary to get people in and out of the room. The group's size, including the number of facilitators, will determine if people will stay in the building or if they need to venture outside.

Group Size

Any, but best for medium to large groups.

Instructions

Determine a point in the session where it would be appropriate for everyone to take an outside field trip. There are a variety of activities in which the participants can engage:

- Roundtable discussions between relevant parties
- Investigate issues by interviewing other members of the business
- Break down silos through discussion with other teams
- Generate new ideas, with the change in scenery acting as a stimulus

After everyone has returned, debrief or have the teams present their findings back to the room. Consolidate the learnings or outcomes from the field trip.

Additional Information

If you are using a field trip as a way to generate new ideas, structure the conversation for the teams before they embark on their trip. Ensure you frame the conversation as questions so the teams return to the room with various options and suggestions.

You might ask questions like:

- How might we improve...?
- In what ways could we do...differently?

- How can we realize our goals?

Variation

If time permits you can schedule an actual field trip to a completely different venue. This can really bring out the creativity.

GREAT CLOSINGS

Think of the workshop as an epic story. It must have a captivating start to engage people. The middle has to be challenging or difficult enough to both hold their attention and give them some anxiety. They need to push themselves while wondering if they will be able to do it. The end must be dramatic and involve as much discussion as appropriate to drill the message home. Most people remember the beginning and the ending of things, like concerts, stories, plays, and movies. After an intense workshop you need to create a big finish. And we are not just talking about a group photo, although we do that too.

The workshops we offer are playful and fun but they are also hard work and sometimes stressful. We frequently unearth things that

surprise people. By the end participants are usually emotionally, mentally, and physically drained. We always end an engagement with some type of big close that will make people feel both validated and honored. We believe that not doing this would be a missed opportunity, not to mention inappropriate.

Here are some examples of big closings we have done that people seem to really respond well to. These finishes serve as rituals but they also carry additional value and meaning for the participants and the client's company. Remember, it is okay to combine several different closes to create a fantastic and memorable ending.



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ACTIVITY 4-I: SIMPLE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Why Use

This is a nice way to end a team workshop. It can also prove extremely valuable in any type of session where there is a group of people who will continue to work together, such as a project team, board, or department. In this closing activity we have people create seven different principles.

When to Use

When you want to align a group or team, or if you need something like a project charter.

Resources

LEGO[®] bricks, Play-Doh[®], or other craft supplies

Time

30 minutes

Group Size

3 – 16 people

Instructions

Explain Simple Guiding Principles (SGP). They are simple, making them easy to remember. They guide decision making or actions so the group can make good choices. They are based on principles that everyone in the group can agree on. They are different from rules. A rule might sound something like: Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth. An SGP sounds something like this: Save water whenever you can. The difference allows people to think in a bigger way and it is focused on the core of the issue. A rule is specific and often misses the bigger opportunity.

After explaining SGPs ask the group to create their own—this will help solidify everyone's thinking after the presentation or workshop. Remind everyone the key is to keep it short to be memorable. It must also be relevant to the group's work. Everyone will build one small model or art story to explain at least one SGP. Listen to everyone's

stories, this should help people imagine more ideas. Ask them to build two or three more SGPs and listen to the new stories.

Line up all of the 3D ideas, with a small note by each so everyone knows what the ideas are about. Give each person a few dots to use as votes—we use two or three—and ask them to place their dots by the ones they like. Designate the top seven models as the most important ones and make a list. Hold a tiebreaker if necessary.

This is a great outcome for the group. At times it might sound like “bumper stickers” as the participants agree on concepts. In reality, the group probably needs it. This process can be used in place of a team charter.

We write the SGP onto the graphic chart we are developing during the session. This allows people to see their ideas being documented. After we complete this stage we have the clients sign the chart. It is a small thing but it has big meaning. This step allows us to bring the process into an agreement or commitment to take the group forward.

Additional information

Groups always want to take their team photo with the chart in the background. We once completed a workshop where the CEO actually took the chart back to the office and it now covers a wall as art. In another case, the client was a non-profit and they took the graphic chart with them everywhere they went, including to national television when they received a big grant.



ACTIVITY 4-2: POSTCARDS

Why Use

To help people think about recommendations and commitments they can make. It is designed to really drill the learning from what happened during the most powerful stage of the workshop. Since this is different for each person they customize their learning. Because of the way our brains are wired we do not always operate on a cognitive emotional level, which is the most powerful level.

When to Use

The postcard activity can be used in many settings, like team workshops, strategy workshops, coaching workshops, and idea finding workshops. Our brains usually do not connect well until we do the following:

- Think and reflect more about a concept in silence.
- Envision how we might express an idea in writing.
- See the words written down in front of us on the card.

- Read the words out loud. This is where the brain hears the information for the first time, and the brain only believes it when it hears it.

Resources

Postcards, pens or Sharpie markers

Time

15 minutes

Group Size

Any

Instructions

We ask that people write to themselves by making a recommendation and a commitment. Each person gets a postcard. One side has a colorful photo of an art model or drawing. The other side has a place for their address and a space for a stamp. In the area where they can write a message, we have two thoughts they must complete:

We would be crazy if we didn't:

I commit to:

When we give them the cards we say something like:

You have now experienced the organization in a new way. You have new thinking and a new perspective. Some obvious things came out of the discussions. Please take 15 minutes to capture your thoughts. On this card answer these two questions. Make sure you link the first question's answer to the second question's answer.

Question one: "We would be crazy if we didn't..." and answer the question.

Think about what you can do to make this come to a reality by completing the next sentence.

Question two: "I commit to..."

This is a quiet writing activity. When it is completed each person has an idea of what they want to do to drive the process forward. Have them put their home addresses on the cards so you can mail it to them in three months' time. That seems to be a good length of time for them to really get started on what they say they are going to do. It is also about the right amount of time for you to mail the card to them so they can remember the process where the ideas emerged. If you use a nice photo on one side people are more likely to keep the cards on their desks or their filing cabinets, which will serve as a reminder of their great experience with you.



ACTIVITY 4-3: THE FUTURE AWAITS

Why Use

To extend the Postcards activity.

When to Use

Immediately after everyone has finished writing out their postcards.

Resources

Painter's tape, string, or rope, anything you can use to make a straight line across the floor.

Time

2 minutes per person

Group Size

Any

Instructions

Make a line down the middle of the room while the participants are writing on their postcards. When everyone has finished, ask them to stand along one side of the line. Give this explanation to the group:

This tape represents the future. Now that you have discussed all the ideas and concepts today—and maybe decided on some actions and created SGPs—and have made recommendations and commitments, you are now moving into the future, never to go back again. When you read your card please cross the line (point at the tape) and step in to your future.

Everyone has fun with this, but make sure no one goes back across the line. As individuals cross over everyone cheers for them.

Continue until everyone has read their commitments and crossed the line. Then we pick up the line from the floor and say something like, “The past is behind us. You are now in the future and may the force be with you,” or something equally playful and fun.

ACTIVITY 4-4: THREE WORDS

Why Use

To help each person reflect on the day and help bring the day to a positive close.

When to Use

At the very end of the day.

Resources

Space

Time

10 seconds per person

Group Size

Any

Instructions

Ask everyone to form a circle; then ask people if they are tired. They usually are because the process has squeezed every good idea from their brains. They tend to look a bit drained. This activity puts some life back into the participants before we take the last group photo and say goodbye.

Instruct the group to start at your left and say three words about the day. Give the first person time to think by adding, "If someone else says the words you want to say, don't worry. Just say your 3 words. We will go rapid fire so the three words are not connected, go." People quickly take turns and say words like, "Fun, playful, energy," or "Teamwork, inspirational, creative," and this continues around the room. This is a fast close, perfect if you are short on time. But it is powerful and valuable.

After they say their three words the people are usually in a good mood. They pick words that are fun and reflect their day. Some of the words we frequently hear are: powerful, surprising, refreshing, energizing,

motivating, teamwork, and connecting. At the end of a workshop leaders and/or clients love to hear this instant feedback. It illustrates that we have delivered on our promise to get 100% engagement.

Additional Information

Before I announce that we are getting into a circle I quietly speak to the boss or the person who hired me to let them know we are going to do a close. I say, "I'm going to close in a few minutes and I would like you to stand to my right. We are going to do a circle activity and I want to end with you so you can thank everyone for their time today." This is important because the leaders often forget they should thank people for the hard work they put into the activities.

When we end with the leaders they will add their three words. They may need a slight nudge to remind them they are also going to thank everyone. They usually give their thanks with great energy and also remember to thank us, the facilitators. We in turn thank them for their trust in us and the process. And we also thank the participants for playing with us.

ACTIVITY 4-5: RAPID FIRE DOCUMENTATION

Why Use

When you want to summarize a discussion or learning.

When to Use

When you are ending a day or session.

Resources

2 – 3 flip charts with lots of paper, easels, markers, and tape

Time

15 – 30 minutes, more if you are summarizing a longer session

Group Size

Any

Instructions

You will need three volunteers, two to serve as scribes and the other to

post papers on the wall. Station each of the scribes at an easel with flip charts at the front of the room. Then ask the group to list things they heard or learned today, anything they thought was useful or helpful, or things they'd like to ponder or learn more about.

As the participants start to offer their thoughts, the scribes take turns documenting the pieces of information. As the pages fill up the volunteer with the tape takes the completed sheets and posts them on the walls. Keep going until you have filled many sheets and the group begins to run out of ideas.

When the pages are full you can then comment on how much they have learned in one session. This is a great way for people to recall information and see the information compiled. When they are done, invite participants to take photos of the notes with their smart phones.

Teach me!

People will forget what happened at your event unless you make it memorable. One way to make things stick is to ask the participants to

take something they learned and teach it to others. Everyone finds a partner and teaches that person something they really want to remember. Get into partners. Person one shares something with person two. Person two asks questions as if hearing the information for the first time. Then switch roles and repeat the activity.



ACTIVITY 4-6: PICTURE CARDS

Why Use

Here, we are using this activity to formulate closing thoughts. However, you should note this activity has many other uses, from sparking imaginations to problem solving.

When to Use

Anytime you want to engage imaginations or add creativity.

Resources

We have a lovely set of picture cards we have made over the years. These cards are high quality photographs of random things. They include pictures of nature, people, and other objects. They are the size of tarot cards.

Time

5 minutes for searching and 1 – 2 minutes per person to tell their

story.

Group Size

Up to a maximum of about 50 people

Instructions

Randomly lay out the cards on the floor or on a table. Ask each participant to select a card they feel captures what they are taking away from the day. After the participants have their cards—this can take around 5 minutes—we have them stand in a circle. We ask everyone to take turns showing us their cards, explaining what they picked and why, and how it connects for them. This is a great way to end a workshop. You can then take a photo of each person holding their card, you can have people journal about their experience using the card, or you can have them find a partner to share their experience, using the card. The use of the picture is a projection technique that allows everyone to be creative without having to do anything at all. From the years we have been doing this we have found that people in multiple demographics love this activity.

Facilitation Tip

You can create your own cards using greeting cards or photos from magazines or Internet stock photography. The caution is that when working with corporate clients you need to make these tools look as professional as possible or they will disassociate and check out.



ACTIVITY 4-7: INSTANT RESEARCH

Why Use

A fun way to end the day and encourage reflection.

When to Use

Use to recap when closing a workshop or meeting.

This is a fun thing we did with a brilliant man named Jim Person. We loved the activity the first time as participants, and we still love using this as facilitators. We have done it many, many times and it never seems to get old. Of course, we always do this with new participants.

Resources

None

Time

3 minutes

Group Size

Any

Instructions

We tell people that we need to do some real time research with them. This always seems to interest people. We then say, “Put your hand up and leave it up if during the day you:

- Learned something new
- Felt that people listened to you
- Felt that you were listening
- Had fun.”

At this point every hand is up. We then turn to the organizer and say, “Please give a feedback form to everyone who has their hand up.”

This lighthearted and very fast game gets people thinking quickly about the truth: they had fun, they learned new things, and they felt like their co-workers listened to them. This playful workshop may be the first time that people have indeed felt heard.

ACTIVITY 4-8: GALLERY WALK

Why Use

To help solidify the discussions, learning, and capture information from the meeting, workshop, or training.

When to Use

Anytime you think people need to integrate, solidify, or sum up what they have learned.

Resources

Flip chart paper, tape, markers

Time

We usually use 30 minutes for each half day session.

Group Size

Any

Instructions

While people are building we go around the room and post flip charts on the walls. We then add some type of heading regarding a topic area we discussed. We place markers on the floor below each flip chart sheet. We tell them this is a closed book pop quiz, but cheating is encouraged. We invite them to walk around the room and work together to write down as much as they like on each sheet. If they run out of thoughts, move to the next sheet. Once the sheets are populated I then have someone present the sheets. This is a great way to solidify learning and to illustrate how much they have learned. It also makes a great photo opportunity for you as people try to remember things, talk to each other to confirm, and then write on the flip charts.

Facilitation Tip

Make sure the markers do not bleed through the paper onto the wall. No one wants to clean up the mess and it could be an expensive mistake if you are in a hotel or other offsite venue.



ACTIVITY 4-9: MAKE AN ARTIFACT

Why Use

To summarize

When to Use

When you want a fun end to the day

Resources

Anything from paper to coffee cups in the room—groups find their own or you can bring in an assortment of craft supplies, including foil and other low costs items.

Time

30 – 45 minutes

Group Size

Groups of 3 – 5 participants

Instructions

After the participants are in small groups, you can either randomly hand out notes with concepts from the day, or you can let people make up their own messages. Each team has 40 minutes to find a creative and interesting way to summarize something—either something you selected for them or something that they decided is valuable—and present it back to the group. It needs to be in the form of a model or artifact that is a metaphor for their learning. The groups will need to make up a story for their models. Announcing that you will videotape the presentations will raise the bar and this can bring excellent results. We make a rule that everyone has to do something. Many participants enjoy using props. This can be a fun activity to take photos of both during the creation stage and during presentations. Even though people might complain at the beginning, we find they become quite excited as they start to plan out their ideas.

ACTIVITY 4-10: LOVE LETTER

Why Use

This is a fun writing activity and it is great after a workshop while people are feeling good about the work they have done together.

When to Use

When you want to insert some fun and positive energy

Resources

Lined paper and pens for each participant

Time

About 30 minutes

Group Size

Any

Instructions

Ask people to take a blank sheet of paper and write the following at the top:

Dear (insert the department, team, company, community, organization),

I love you!

You are so very special to me because...

Over the years you have reminded me that...

They complete these two sentences as they wish. Then they fold the paper to hide the two sentences they completed and pass the letter to the person to the left. This individual then finishes the two sentences in their own way, folds the paper to hide their lines, and passes it to the left again. Continue to pass the letter around so everyone has a chance to add a few lines. Once you feel there is a good amount of information on the letter, have the last person end the letter with a salutation. They can write something such as: Your best (blank), Name. Allow them to use any closing they like.

Then the participants pass the letters again, but this time the letters will go down three people to the left. The last person to get the letter opens the entire letter and reads it.

Variation

For fun, we ask a few people if they would like to share their letters. We tell them they have to read aloud, with passion, to the entire group. Usually some closet actors and actresses emerge. And we all enjoy the drama.



ACTIVITY 4-II: LEGO® KEYCHAIN GAME

Why Use

To help teams bond and to give everyone a transitional object that helps them remember what they promised.

When to Use

To close a workshop or any occasion where you need to celebrate or conduct a ritual.

Resources

LEGO® Minifigure superhero keychains

Time

5 minutes for the participants to select keychains and 2 minutes per person to exchange them.

Group Size

Any

Instructions

This is a secret activity. We give each participant the name of someone in the group. We ask them to think of that person and the gift they bring to the organization and what they can deliver. They must then select a LEGO® keychain to be that person's avatar or persona. Tell the participants to really think and connect the Minifigure to the individual. We lay out twice the number of keychains as participants to ensure a good selection. After everyone has made their selection they take their keychains and stand in a designated area.

One at a time, we ask the participants to present their keychain gifts by saying something like, "I picked Batman because I think he has great powers of knowing when to show up fast, and he is always there for an emergency. I am giving this keychain to Bob, who always helps me when I have a challenging client." The participant then gives the keychain to Bob, who comes up to the front. This is a great photo opportunity and we take advantage of it. Bob then presents the next keychain, and this continues until everyone has had a turn.

After everyone has received their keychains, remind them to put them on their keys or somewhere they will see the Minifigure every day. This then becomes what we call a transitional object; it helps people connect to their commitments. This will not only solidify the messages and key takeaways from the day, but it is a great way for the participants to remember and acknowledge each other with a gift. Finish off by selecting a great background for a group photo, keychains included.

The added benefit to this exercise is the participants then walk around with a LEGO® keychain. When others ask them why they have a Batman keychain they cannot help but smile and remember the workshop, and tell their story. What great marketing.

Additional Information

On a budget? You can also use the nice LEGO® stickers that have pictures of Minifigures. Just cut them up and put them on the table. When people receive their stickers have them stick these on something like the back of their company name tag or their journal, something they will see often.

Facilitation Tip

There is a good selection of keychains available in stores and online. We try to have at least twice the number we need so there is a good selection. We also try to pick a variety so participants are not limited to only superheroes; we also have police or firefighters, doctors, Yoda, and Harry Potter. There are also a few female figures but females do not seem to mind if they receive a male figure like Luke Skywalker.





ACTIVITY 4-12: THE HAIKU

Why Use

To sum up conversations and ensure everyone feels their views and learnings are valuable.

When to Use

Anytime you need to summarize discussions and make people feel important.

Resources

Paper and pens for each participant

Time

30 minutes to write and share

Group Size

Individuals or small groups

Instructions

Explain that a haiku is a poem consisting of three lines, with the first and last line each having 5 syllables and the middle line having 7 syllables. Ask the participants—as individuals or groups—to write a haiku that summarizes their learnings or a key message from the day. Assure everyone it is okay if they do not strictly adhere to the syllable count. You may want to play background music for inspiration. Also, be clear that the final version of the haiku needs to be written out neatly.

When everyone has finished their haikus, place them at the center of a table or on the floor. Invite people to pick one up and read it aloud. It is okay for the poets to remain anonymous. After each reading, applaud the haiku and the creativity that went into it.

Now debrief. If required, note how we are all creative and can apply our skills to forming our ideas into a very different mode of communication. This ensures we can transform messages and deliver them in

innovative ways.

ACTIVITY 4-13: THE TWEET

Why Use

This is a great way to integrate social media into your sessions. It also ensures that people are able to summarize what they learned, enjoyed, or will commit to into a short and snappy sentence or phrase. It encourages the group to get to the crux of things and find a creative way of framing their viewpoints.

When to Use

Use the 140 character Tweet format, even if there are team members who are not on Twitter. Anyone registered for this social media site can upload all the Tweets from the room. Obviously, personal or confidential information should be excluded for privacy reasons.

Resources

Pen and paper, an Internet connected device—if you choose to send out the Tweets

Time

5 – 7 minutes

Group Size

Any size

Instructions

Ask the group to think about the day—their insights, learnings, commitments, action plans, key ideas—and try to capture everything in a message of 140 characters, including spaces. Play background music while everyone is working. They can work individually or in groups. When everyone is done, have a few people read out their Tweets. Then upload to Twitter and see how many Retweets you get.

Additional Information

We have used this activity with a variety of generations. If people have not been exposed to using social media within their meetings or business, this is a user-friendly way of getting them started. It is an excellent way to consolidate learning. Participants have to consider the message, try out different versions, write the message, say it aloud, and type it out into an electronic device.

Variations

You can load images, phrases, or photos—if you have permission—onto other social media sites such as Pinterest, Facebook, or Instagram. Participants who are hooked on social media enjoy merging the real and virtual worlds in this way.

You can also invite the group to tighten their messages by reducing their character count from 140 to 70. And why stop there, condense the message down to a single word.



ACTIVITY 4-14: THE TRAFFIC LIGHT

Why Use

This is an all-time favorite because it is just so useful and simple. No preparation is required and it is a lifesaver when energy is dipping and the group needs to refocus. The key items are represented in an extremely visual way, which helps the team members to easily recall the information.

When to Use

This activity has various purposes and can be used at different times throughout a session. You might do this activity to:

- End a session as the group makes commitments to what they are going to place in to action;
- Review the way forward and summarize and document the actions so they can be posted in the office for reference at a later stage;
- Debrief around a business's challenges, as a response that

allows everyone to have a say;

- Take feedback in a session—change the questions slightly to ask the group what you can do differently;
- Assist you in a coaching session.

Resources

Templates of traffic lights or sheets of A5 paper

Time

10 – 60 minutes, depending on how far you plan to go

Group Size

Any

Instructions

Give each participant a traffic light template or a sheet of paper to draw their own. In the red area they will write what they plan to stop doing. In the green area, they will write the things they will start doing. In the yellow area they will write about the actions they will

continue. Give the group plenty of time and facilitate the conversations as needed. For the debrief, the groups will either present their traffic lights or simply discuss them with each other. Decide if you will save the traffic lights to reference in follow-up meetings.

Additional Information

The traffic light has several applications and we have used it in large groups as well as in one-on-one sessions. It enables people to place their thoughts into a visual template so they can be presented in a logical way for all to understand.

ACTIVITY 4-15: THE CERTIFICATE

Why Use

Sometimes clients want us to provide certificates that document hours or other details. Certain professionals, such as management consultants, HR professionals, and insurance providers must dedicate a certain number of hours each year for development work. Our workshops are a way they can gather those hours. In these cases, we create certificates of attendance.

When to Use

At the end of a workshop or training session.

Resources

Certificates, one per person

Time

15 minutes

Group Size

Any

Instructions

People like getting these certificates but it is anticlimactic to just hand them out. It is also boring and a waste of precious workshop time to have numerous people go up one by one to get a certificate. It does not make things more exciting if you take their photograph and people clap.

Here is a fun spin on handing out certificates. Give the certificate to the wrong person and say, "I know this is not you, but just hang on to the certificate for a minute until I give you instructions."

Then tell everyone to find the person whose certificate they have. They need to present it to them and tell them why they are a great team member, board member, co-worker, or associate. The presenter also has to add something positive about their work. This activity leaves people shining.

We have our camera ready and quickly take photos of the exchanges as we go. We get great shots of people smiling and laughing and being totally engaged as they get and receive feedback.

You do not need to sort the certificates so people get each other's names. As people are waiting to present their certificates they get to listen to others talk and exchange greetings and compliments. What better way to close? You do not do anything, they do. Again, this is a fantastic way to have people leave your workshop feeling totally energized.

Additional Information

We create the certificates ahead of time, and include the person's name and the number of hours they attended; and, of course, we sign the certificates. The certificates are also great because people will keep them for years, and your company's name is clearly visible. This is a nice marketing reminder of you and your great work.

ACTIVITY 4-16: GROUP PHOTO

Why Use

To give the client a photographic reminder of the event.

When to Use

At the very end of the day.

Resources

Camera

Time

10 minutes

Group Size

Any

Instructions

When taking the group photos we ask people to pose in front of their

3D model or graphic chart. We then take a few pictures. Then we ask the group to ham it up. We will specify, sometimes by directing everyone to do a “Yay!” shot where they show how it looks to achieve the success they spent the day planning.

We take quite a few pictures as people have fun exaggerating their poses. These are always their favorite photos and the ones they will enlarge and put on their office walls. It might sound very North American, but culture does not seem to matter. People love this type of close where they exaggerate the fun. We are all children at heart and a playful close really makes people smile. Why end with the usual boring shot where people just stand there, looking serious, when you can give them a lasting memory that really solidifies the learning?

We always end our sessions on time so we have time to do this big close. It leaves people feeling fantastic. And you have captured that energy that you will send back to them. Every time they see the picture they will feel the energy.

GOOD THINGS TO KNOW

This section contains some friendly advice and ideas to consider, things that might help you on your journey. Some of these we have learned the hard way, others we have learned from our guides and teachers. And in the spirit of making all training days, events, and meetings better, we are now sharing this information with you. This is in no way an exhaustive list but it is enough to help you get started. One day, you too will discover information to add to this list.

GATHERING INFORMATION

Throughout the process we do a number of things to gather information. We are going to share some of our favorite methods. But use

your imagination, the possibilities are endless:

- Use a still camera and follow a shot list
- Ask people to write their ideas on sticky notes and then place them on a graphic chart
- Capture the entire event on video
- Use a GoPro camera and film from the ceiling
- Bring an individual who will act solely as a scribe
- Use a graphic facilitator to document the process
- Take notes

become obvious. Regardless, we always create a report. It is a good takeaway for the client's reference. And this type of document does hang around, so it is nice for marketing and aftercare.

PROJECT CHARTS

The process is great for facilitating real-time thinking. It is a powerful way to test out scenarios in a situational, prototyping activity. The whole process is designed to gain insights and new thinking. It is not strategic planning in the traditional sense of the word but it provides great direction for spring boarding strategic planning. The way we use this process helps clients to become clear about their current situations, internally and externally. It is designed to get people to think at a deeper level and to concentrate on what they are thinking about, one thing at a time.

We run each scenario, knowing the last question is the one we want to document for the client to have as an action item. The final question seeks the wisest action choice, which is great for gaining alignment from the participants. If you are tasked with more than creating

Whatever process you use, make sure the client is happy with the amount of information you gather and present back. In most cases, the client does not want a big report unless they are using it to justify the time to those who covered the expense. Usually the client is there at the table and they are learning as they go and making decisions in real time. This process is so powerful the necessary actions usually

simple alignment and the client is looking for an action plan, then this question will help you create a great plan:

- List the action items the group chooses for the last question.
- Write each action onto a single sticky note.
- Cluster the sticky notes into groups of items.
- Take the groups and write out meaningful action steps.

If you want to take this to the next step, you can create a grid with the following priority areas: high, medium, and low. Also prioritize by action type: short term, medium term, and long term.

FOLLOW UP

Now that the session is over, you need to determine how you will continue to work with and follow up with the client. Here are a few things we do.

Website

We have a backend on our website. We send them a link and they can see all the videos, photographs, and other resources we have uploaded for them. The webpage has their logo, along with the materials. This stays up for about six months. Before we take it down we email them and remind them to get what they need. This is a great way to follow up with them and make sure they are moving in the right direction. If there is any follow-up work, it is a great time to see what else they need from you.

Report

We produce a report for the client that includes everything from the workshop. We do not write out long pages. We outline high-level thinking and outcomes, along with the process. This report includes many high-quality photos and links to other materials, books, or articles we deem to be helpful.

Postcards

We do a number of things with postcards. In some cases we scan each one and then every quarter we send the client “Postcards from Oak

Bay,” or wherever we held the retreat. The postcards accompany photographs and because people do not know what might be in this quarterly mini newsletter format, they open it and read what is there. It is another way to remind clients of what they did, why they did it, and how they are now acting based on this workshop.

Many strategy sessions end with the session. People talk a lot and make decisions. But in the end, they do not follow through on implementation. These 3D creativity workshops are powerful because they actually do what they set out to do. On a process and content level:

- We keep people engaged for the entire day.
- We test assumptions.
- People talk about real issues.
- Everyone has a voice and people listen.
- People understand decisions and action items, making them easier to implement immediately.
- People are aligned.

- Mental maps are more accurate.

On a deeper level, the workshop facilitates a process where:

- Participants can easily recall the event from long-term memory;
- New thinking emerges;
- The thinking changes to how people feel emotionally;
- Positive emotions influence behavior;
- New behavior drives better results.

A SAMPLE ROADMAP

			plant issues (refreshments and restrooms).
Pre activity	Opener: Have music playing as they enter the room; you can theme it with your topic	9:40-9:45	Short video clip from YouTube on your topic or a short reading that each person does alone
Pre activity	Ground rules are on the table and visible to all	9:40-10:00	Small group discussion using handouts with questions based on your topic; questions or ideas are documented by the group on flip charts
9:00-9:15	Opener: Make your own name tag	10:00-10:15	Closer: Large group feedback—each table reports back on discussion posted on their flip chart, group posts these ideas on the wall; you give rapid feedback or make short comments to each group as needed
9:15-9:30	Introduce yourself to 5 people game using the name tags – see how many new people you can meet		
9:30-9:40	Sort into small tables using a game sorter; once seated review the ground rules and ask for everyone to agree to them; then review the housekeeping items like agenda and any physical	10:15-10:30	Break
		10:30-10:45	Opener: Add some action here, do a standing moving activity like a new

	table sorter
10:45-11:00	Presentation of your content or concept
11:00-11:15	Walk and talk to integrate knowledge. Have each person find someone they have not yet spoken with and go for a 15 minute walk, talking about what they have learned so far, how they will use the information
11:15-11:30	Journal writing – individual silent activity. This allows introverts to assimilate the learning and provides time for extroverts to reflect.
11:45-12:00	Rapid fire documentation: Ask for two or three scribes to come to the front. Ask what have you learned or what are you thinking about the day so far. As people talk the scribes document, going back and forth. This works well with a

larger group.

YOUR BAG OF RESOURCES

In most cases you can buy the materials for these activities from a craft store, office supply store, or toy store. We have purposely made the necessary supplies as accessible as possible so you can start using these ideas right away. If we have used supplies here that you are not familiar with or you want to know what we use, please visit the web-site at:

<http://strategicplaytraining.com>

Here you will find more ideas, templates to download, and other resources.



DEALING WITH CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS

Watch out in meetings or sessions to ensure you have full engagement; this will help you to get a great outcome that achieves the

objectives you have created. If you do a good job of mixing up the tables at the beginning of a session and you have visibly posted clear ground rules you are less likely to have issues. But you need to stay alert to spot certain issues.

Watch out for the exclusion of participants. Exclusion is often unintentional and can be easy to overlook. But it can have severe consequences for the individual and for the culture of the organization. We sometimes do not realize just how much exclusion affects people.

Be aware of participants who are holding back and where their body language is closed and they are avoiding eye contact. It could be that others in the room are not including the participant in the discussion. If you see this, you can simply ask the person an open question like “What do you think?”

Be prepared to **be proactive** and do not just wish that this will go away on its own.

If participants are not responding to questions, you might need to speak to them individually during a break to find out what is really going on.

Take heed of participants who are being negative—signs include rolling eyes or making inappropriate comments. If you have done a good job of mixing up the groups at the beginning, this is less likely to be a problem. However, if you do have issues try ignoring them at first and going with the positive energy in the room. That may be all that is needed. But if you feel the individual is hindering the process for the group you may need to do more. You might need to call the person aside or get a manager involved. If you allow this sense of negativity to continue, it will prevent learning; all of your good efforts will be undermined. It only takes one or two to spoil the day for the rest of the group.

Setting some ground rules at the start is helpful. Sometimes it is as simple as asking, “What is going on here that I am perhaps not aware

of or need to know? Are we following the ground rules we agreed on?” You may need to reread the rules as a reminder of what everyone agreed to.

Handing out the evaluation forms at the beginning of the session may help you to preempt any issues. However, you still need to be prepared to manage all types of participants. If you are truly concerned about someone in your group, you can always check with the person who hired you.

Remember, all organizations have a few people who are problematic. If you have one or two of them in your group you can bet they are not just problems for you. They have been problematic for the organization in many other ways.

Deal with latecomers. Do not point out they are late the first time. Use this as an opportunity to review. Ask the participants who arrived on time to share the important points and key messages they have gained so far. This provides for a win-win-win situation. Within a few

minutes the latecomer is up to speed and the participants have reviewed the lessons they learned. In some cases the latecomers can catch up. If your sessions are ongoing talk to them in private and explain that this is disruptive to the rest of the group. Ask how they can correct this issue.

Always start the session on time. Do not punish those who are on time.

Set an unusual time to resume the session after a break to make it easier to remember. You can also say that for those who come back two minutes earlier you will share a special tip or story, or provide the answer to a quiz question. This is not only an appropriate way of kicking off a conference or offsite event, it is equally suitable for smaller meetings.

Dealing with participants who grandstand. Acknowledge their contributions and refer back to the key topic so they remain on track. Break the group into mini-groups fairly quickly and give them a short

timeframe to do a particular activity. The group will normally keep that participant in check. If they continue to ask long-winded questions or take too long to express their views, ask if they can write their concerns on a sticky note. We find it helpful to create a “Capture the Question” poster sheet. This is not a *parking lot*, which implies that their ideas are not important, but a way to capture ideas and questions so we have a chance to address all ideas when the timing is right.

LET’S PLAY

Opening and closing your sessions, along with keeping the energy high during your time together, is vital to ensuring a good and memorable consumer experience. It does not matter how good your content is if the participants forget everything when the event ends. The great content you created and the conversations you facilitated will be lost.

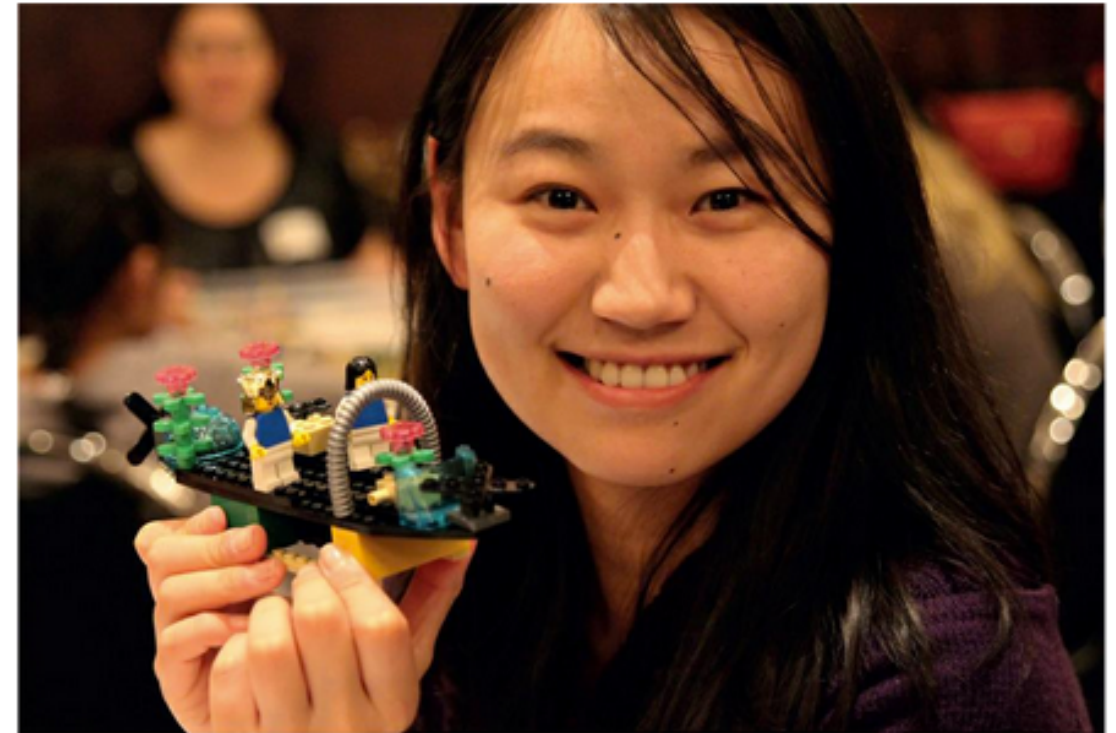
You do not need to do all these activities at once, pick a few and test

and prototype them. See for yourself how your clients respond to your efforts. It takes practice to know which activities will work best where and when, and with whom. You cannot get that experience if you are not testing and trying. So put down this book and find some friendly people to try these with—get out there and do it!

Taking five minutes out of the agenda to insert some fun, playful, activity can make the difference between participants dreading an off-site and leaving feeling engaged, energized, full of knowledge and ideas, and happy.

If you have any ideas for variations on our activities that you would like to share with us, please let us know. We will collect these and then pass them on, either on our blog or in our newsletter.

Play well, Work smart, Be happy!



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jacqueline Lloyd Smith and Dr. Denise Meyerson met in Billund, Denmark in 2007, while both were licensed partners for the LEGO® Systems Group. They were both appointed to the Play4Business LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY™ Training Board in 2010 and are Master Trainers in the methods of LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY™. Jacquie and Denise were early adopters and leaders in bringing LSP to Canada and Australia. Jacquie continues to serve the Americas, based out of British Columbia, Canada. She is the principal for Strategic Play® Group Limited. Denise continues to serve Oceania, based out of Queensland, Australia. She is the principal for Management Consulting International (MCI).

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INDEX OF ACTIVITIES

60 Seconds of Love, [25](#)

Add Music, [14](#)

Certificate, The, [102](#)

Color Game, The, [68](#)

Draw a Tablemate, [35](#)

Face Club, [20](#)

Feedback Forms, [30](#)

Field Trip, The, [73](#)

Future Awaits, The, [81](#)

Gallery Walk, [89](#)

Ground Rules, [16](#)

Group Doodle Networking, [56](#)

Group Photo, [104](#)

Guest Speaker, The, [18](#)

Haiku, The, [97](#)

Human Bar Chart, The, [67](#)

Human Treasure Hunt, The, [71](#)

Humming Game, The, [62](#)

Instant Research, [88](#)

Invitations, [12](#)

Learning Journal, [43](#)

LEGO® Keychain Game, [94](#)

LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® Tower, [40](#)

Line Game, [57](#)

Love Letter, [92](#)

Make an Artifact, [91](#)

Make and Create, [31](#)

Message for You!, [44](#)

Music to Generate Ideas, [51](#)

My Soundtrack, [22](#)

Picture Cards, [86](#)

Postcards, [79](#)

Rapid Fire Documentation, [84](#)

Rock, Paper, Scissors Contest, [69](#)

Silent Listening, [45](#)

Simple Guiding Principles, [77](#)

Smartphone Introduction, [23](#)

Speed Networking and Introductions, [27](#)

This or That, [65](#)

Three Words, [82](#)

Traffic Light, The, [100](#)

Triangle, The, [59](#)

Tweet, The, [98](#)

Used People Game The, [63](#)

Walk and Talk, [54](#)

What's the Same or Different?, [38](#)

Who am I?, [28](#)

X Factor, The, [36](#)

YouTube Video Clips, [47](#)

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